

Embassy Baghdad Warden Message on IZ Checkpoints and Regulations

In recent days, reports of Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army roving traffic control points being set up within the International Zone (IZ) have become more frequent. These control points are usually established along frequented used routes for transiting the various sectors of the IZ and are more common outside of daylight hours. The U.S. Embassy Baghdad has provided guidance to its staff on how best to respond at these control points, shared below, and also alerts American Citizens to recent changes from the Iraqi government regarding the enforcement of vehicle registration, pedestrian access and escort privileges within the IZ.

Traffic Control Points

If approaching or stopped at any fixed or roving control point, American citizens should exercise caution, remain calm and cooperate with the Iraqi authorities to the best of their ability. In most cases, Iraqi security personnel will only stop a vehicle to verify the vehicle and passenger identity before allowing the vehicle to pass. However, in some cases, security personnel have tried to open vehicle doors or have directed occupants to open car doors for further identification checks. Thus far, all who have complied have passed safely and there have been no adverse incidents. In previous years in Iraq, persons dressed in Iraqi security force uniforms kidnapped Iraqis and foreigners, although there were no such incidents in the IZ. American citizens moving around the IZ now need to be aware of the risks and respond appropriately.

The U.S. Embassy has provided the following guidance to its staff to help them respond appropriately at IZ traffic control and inspection points, as well as to understand the changing environment within the IZ:

While moving within the IZ, Embassy personnel

- must travel with another employee or “buddy,”
- must always carry a working cell phone or radio,
- must carry at least two forms of photo identification,
- must notify a trusted third person of the intended travel plans,
- must notify that person upon arrival at their destination and when on the way back.

Further, when driving within the IZ, embassy employees have been advised to always have doors locked, seatbelts worn and both driver and passenger(s) should scan the area for possible hazards and threats to the vehicle. As a vehicle approaches a control point, the driver should concentrate on the Iraqi official directing the vehicle into the

control point while slowing down the vehicle. The driver should follow all directions given and unless the driver can articulate a reasonable suspicion that the control point is not staffed by authentic Iraqi officials. Embassy staff have also been advised not to attempt to run through or avoid a control point by reversing direction.

When entering a control point during hours of darkness, turn off headlights, turn on the interior vehicle lights, and display identification so it can clearly be viewed through the vehicle's window. Do not display and/or reach for any weapons, make any hostile or furtive moves or attempt to hide anything inside of the vehicle. Hands should remain in plain view at all times. If a control point official asks that the vehicle door be opened, embassy personnel have been advised to use their best judgment, and should consider opening to politely answer all questions. There should be no attempt to argue or intimidate one's way through the control point. Allow a search of the vehicle if the control point official requests to do so. American citizens are requested to notify the U.S. Embassy of any incidents that do not proceed smoothly and professionally. The American citizen emergency duty line is 0770-443-2594 (or from the U.S. dial 011-964-770-443-2594). The US Embassy email address for American citizens is:

BaghdadACS@state.gov.

Please remember that you do not have a right to operate a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs, in an unsafe manner, or in violation of local traffic laws.

Enforcement of Vehicle Registration, Pedestrian Access and Escort Privileges in the IZ

The U.S. Embassy Baghdad also alerts American Citizens to recent changes from the Iraqi government regarding the enforcement of vehicle registration, pedestrian access and escort privileges within the IZ. The Embassy is aware that Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Army units are enforcing vehicle registration and licensing requirements for all vehicles entering or traveling within the IZ. Iraqi officials may confiscate or deny IZ access to vehicles not properly licensed. In addition, the implementation of new rules governing entry into the IZ by local nationals, third-country nationals and contractors may result in delays and possible denial of entry for individuals not holding an IZ badge. Limits are also being imposed upon the number of individuals that may be escorted, per authorized person, into the IZ. At present, these changes appear to be applicable to the IZ only; however, Iraqi security regulations can change on short notice. The Embassy strongly encourages all persons travelling within both the IZ and elsewhere in Iraq to be cognizant of rapidly changing procedures that are implemented on short notice and to exercise patience and caution to avoid checkpoint incidents.

U.S. citizens may also call the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the United States for the latest travel information. The Office of Overseas Citizens Services can be reached from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday, by calling 1-888-407-4747 from within the U.S. and Canada, or by calling (202) 501-4444 from other countries.

Americans living or traveling in Iraq are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Iraq. Americans without Internet access may register directly at the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. For further information, please consult the [Country Specific Information](#) for Iraq, the [Iraq Travel Warning](#), as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#), both of which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov/>. The U.S. Embassy is located in the International Zone, at the New Embassy Compound on Al Kindi Street, (across from FOB Union III.) To contact the Consular Section by telephone, call our US land line, 1-240-553-0581 x 2413 or from Iraqna, Asia Cell or Atheer mobile phones, call our Asia Cell, 0770-443-0287. Callers with emergencies may also reach us through our 24-hour Asia Cell, 0770-443-2594.